WAKEMAN'S TRAVELS.

Life Among the British Gipsy and Van Dwellers.

GEORGE SMITH'S GREAT WORK

Among the Brick Yards and Canal Boats---He Has Succeeded in Emancipating Seventy Thousand Children from Slavery and Degradation. Life Among the Roving Bands of Gipsies in England.

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Special Correspondence of the Intelligencer.

CHICK, ENGLAND, Nov. 9, 1891.—In my last article from this quaint old English village, I gave a brief outline of the work of George Smith, of Coalville, in rescuing the children of the brick-yards and canal-boats of England from their former frightful condition of slavery, ignorance and misery.

The half of it all could not be fittingly told in an entire volume. But when the social history of England is written, this unlettered and furiously persistent philanthropist must stand as the greatest and most practical child-saver of his time. After between twenty and thirty years of labor through penury, scoffing and cruel discouragement, with a few later years of generally recognized eminence and national respect, this is the record as it now stands. Alone and unaided he has emancipated thirty thousand brick-yard boys and girls from a condition revolting beyond contemplation or description; and he has also, alone and unaided, rescued more than forty thousand canal-boat children from a life of still more brutal slavery, inexpressible degradation, unnamable immorality and actual crime.

This has been accomplished, he believes, through divine aid, guidance and strength. But I find there has been in and through it all, the most practical and sensible methods ever persistently utilized in any great philanthropic work. There have been no committees, bureaus, canting officials or titles. There have been simply the everlasting presentation and iteration of enormous human wrong with the most direct and effective way of righting the wrong going along with it. Possibly no man ever lived in England who has been so helped by the English press. The reason for this is that this George Smith of Coolville first finds a genuine evil to be abolished, but never clamors for its remedy until he has also found a practical, and in the end acceptable method of applying that remedy.

His career is the best illustration I have ever come upon of the splendid willingness of the press of any country to hammer the proposed remedies of genuine philanthropists into the public's head and heart and compel adequate legislation to render them permanently effective. Besides, if this man cannot get all he wants for his cause, he takes all he can get, thanking God, the press, parliament and the people; meanwhile pushing right on for what he has failed to secure; and he never ceases labor and clamor until he gets it. All of which as a policy is worth considering by social philanthropists everywhere. It is particularly worth the thought of those well-meaning but implacably impracticable people, the prohibitionists of our own very much irritated country.

GEORGE SMITH'S WORK.

The consistent and sequential character of his work has been remarkable. Scarcely had he succeeded in placing, on January 1, 1872, twenty thousand of the thirty thousand of the brick-yard little ones in the public schools, than he began his crusade against the iniquities of child-life in the 25,000 canal-boats of England. As a boy-slave in the English brick-yards he had worked where the yards abutted the canals. His own eyes saw the horrors of their experiences and surroundings. In August, 1887, he had so thrilled England with his picturing of these outrages, that parliament finally gave him all he had asked. The bill provided for the registration of all canal-boats by the sanitary authorities; abolished the disease-breeding and carrying character of these craft; limited their number of occupants, brought every boat under surveillance and inspection, placed three-fourths of the canal population in homes and brought every one of the little child beasts into the public schools.

Hardly had the practical workings of the enactments regarding the canal children become operative, when George Smith, of Coalville, began storming parliament in behalf of another class of semi-savage British children. In the long nights of his boyhood, when watching the burning brick kilns, he had not only seen the slavery of brick-yard and canal children around him, but he had stored away grewsome memories of another host of miserable beings that skulked in the shadows about him. More lost than all were these, the half wild children of the gipsies and other tent and van dwellers of the English highways.

The first book he ever possessed—Oliver Goldsmith's "Natural History"—was stolen from him by these little foxes as he nodded by the kilns at night. They stole his clothing; they stole his scant food; they even stole the drinking water from his delft jug. For years these dreary nights were ceaseless efforts to outwit the swarthy outcasts in their pilferings and wonderful devices to supply their own dire needs. But in later life he remembered only their houselessness, hopelessness and utter wretchedness. The brickyard and canal boat children once safe within humanizing influences, he began his last and most difficult struggle, that of molding public opinion to the point of securing laws which at one stroke should rescue the children of British gipsies and all British vagabond folk from their present squalor and wretchedness. Perhaps this is an impossible task. It is the present heroic work of this English philanthropist.

BRITISH GIPSIES.

While our own country has for more than a hundred years been depleting the ranks of English and Scottish gipsies, Mr. Smith estimates their present number to be about 100,000 souls. These are comprised in nearly 20,000 families. About 40 per cent are of Scottish and the remainder of English descent. In my own judgment, based upon personal acquaintance with British gipsies in nearly every county and shire in England and Scotland, his estimate is far too small. I should unhesitatingly say there were more than twice that number.

However this may be, there are as many more humans who are not gipsies, standing in precisely their relation to the British public. These have, perhaps, intermarried with the real Romany, or, possessing no relationship of blood or marriage, have fully acquired the most objectionable traits and customs of British gipsy vagabondism. I use the expression "British gipsy vagabondism" because the average gipsy family among the thousands I personally know in our own country is no more like the average gipsy family of England than is the Americanized English, Scottish or Irish immigrant like the cringing, cowering and often squalid personality he left on the Liverpool, Greenock or Queenstown docks behind him.

Mr. Smith has no patience with sentimentalism over English gypsies. He is willing to admit that my tawny friends of the American roads and waysides, through their infinitely more favorable conditions, enjoy the gypsy prosperity and lead the Romany's genuine idyllic life. He simply sees the appalling degradation of the gypsy and van dwellers about him. It is the helpless, hopeless children of these he would save. He believes it is a social crime that such menace to society should exist, and that society, represented by law, should itself right that wrong. And it may be depended on that, as in the case of the brickyard and canal boat children, his clarion clamor will continue until Britain has rid herself of the plague spot. All his life he has studied their wanderings and ways, and since 1887 he has been almost constantly among them. I like his rugged, vigorous description of his rough experiences with these outcasts, and feel sure that a few of them, in his own language, will be interesting to American readers:

LIFE IN CAMP.

"I have visited many fairs, feasts, races, forests, lanes and wigwams in different parts of England and Scotland, and have eaten and chatted with the tent and van dwellers, with the same sorrowful results confronting me. In many cases where parents attend fairs, feasts and races with cocoanut stalls and other initiatory gambling amusements, the children are sent early in morning to pick up a living in all sorts of questionable ways, and up to 11 or 12 o'clock at night some of the children of both sexes, together with their mothers, are often kept hard at work brawling, banging and shouting with cocoanuts and balls in hand, while in many instances their fathers are drinking in the public houses, and as a reward for their hard day's toiling and trudging, Sunday and weekday, the poor children are sent supperless and unwashed to their bed. This is usually on some old rags, under a street stall, in hail, rain, snow, frost and fogs, and in fine weather with the gleaming moon and twinkling stars peeping through the torn apertures of their street curtains and gutter beds.

"I have seen these men, women and children drunk, 'all of a heap,' like so many dogs, while there were others, engaged in the vagabond's calling, ashamed of their position, who hung down their heads and hands and went with the tide and pellmell crowd down to ruin. In many instances I come upon parents with large families who have taken the wrong turning through their dislike of work, or the hardness of town life, and are now tramping the country lanes, towns and villages with carts, vans and donkey barrows, hawking, begging, lying, and I am afraid often stealing.

"Some time ago I visited with a friend Canning Town, and found scores of families of gipsies and other vagabond travelers living in a state that would shock the most filthy and degraded heathen. More than thirty children of school age clustered around us, not one of whom could tell a letter. In two small four-roomed cottages, into which the gipsies and travelers had crept for a few months in the winter, there dwelt, or pigged, seventeen families of men, women and children. Others were squatting about in filthy wigwams among the slush, filth, rags and straw.

SOME PITIFUL SCENES.

"Among these folk, on the outskirts of London, in one wigwam I have seen a poor woman dying; in another a man who had taken to gipsying was gasping for breath; in another tent a woman was at 'death's door,' and at another abode of death, into which I had to creep on all fours', there sat at the entrance, upon a brick in the mud, a poor lost, present day gipsy girl of seven years of age, but no heavier than a child of one year. Its legs were no thicker than drumsticks. it could neither stand, sing, speak, cry, nor hear.

"At a 'crow pie' feast near Rugby I saw in five vans fifteen children, two of whom could only read or write a little. During the deep snow of the winter of 1887-8 I met with in the old Watling street, but a mile or two from our home here, nine men, women and children crouched together, whose only sleeping apartment was under an old donkey cart. The man had worked honorably and well in my neighborhood for two years. The work gave out and he forsook his trade to follow hedge bottom creeping.

"At Daventry I found a traveling showman and his wife and their seven children. Their only home and stock and trade consisted of a few sticks, old rags, knives, whistles and a cracked drum. At a Northamptonshire fair I found ten vans and carts and between thirty and forty children, only one or two of whom had ever been inside either Sunday or day schools. In three old tumbledown carts, tied together by canvas, string, straps and pieces of rusty hoop iron, there were nineteen children and seven men and women.

"Moses Holland, one of my oldest gipsy friends, knows about 250 families in the midland counties, and thinks there will be an average of five children to each tent or van. In some tents he has seen as many as ten, and in other tents twelve, children. In his own tent his wife was ill, and a dead child lay by her side, which Holland 'laid out' himself on a few rags and some litter.

"At Broomsgrove fair I counted over fifty vans and covered cart homes, connected with which there were nearly 150 children. But six could read or write. In one van, eight feet long, five broad and five high, there slept eleven men, women and children, whose night dresses were saturated wet clothes. Some time ago I visited a flower show at West Haddon and found in two vans and a tumbledown wagon eighteen children and seven men and women. Only two could read and write.

A TERRIBLE LIFE.

"On a recent Sunday in a Northhamptonshire lane, near Buckley wharf, during a pouring rain I came upon eleven present day gipsies, six men and women and five children, whose home was a small rickety donkey cart, tied together with pieces of cord, and a small sheet full of holes, under which they crept at night.

"On the preceding Saturday night these gipsies were under this one rotten sheet for the night by the roadside near Weedon. A policeman told them to 'move on,' as on the following Sunday people would be going to church, and they would be an eyesore to all these good people. Driving the gipsies about the country with a policeman's truncheon and a 'move on' will not improve their condition. It can only be done by means of the sanitary officer's influence directly upon their homes, and by the schoolmaster's influence upon their heads and hearts. And if I live long enough this shall become a universal remedy for all manner of gipsy and other traveling vagabondism in England and Scotland."

These are the beings whom Mr. Smith has given the name of "Gipsy and Van Dwellers," and it is the 40,000 to 80,000 "Gipsy and Van Children" of these wretched, wandering vagabonds, whom he is endeavoring to rescue from their present condition of utter bestiality through the hoped for passage of his "Movable Dwellings Bill." The provisions of this bill, if carried out, would cause the registration of all gipsy and other traveling vans; bring each one under constant surveillance and sanitary inspection, the same as with the lodging houses of the great English cities; prevent the present horrible overcrowding of tents and vans, and, above all, bring every one of these outcast children compulsorily into the public schools, but wholly free of expense to their parents, by a system of free pass books for use wherever the gipsy family might be temporarily tarrying.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

FOUR MORE TOWNS

Won Over by Brazilian Insurgents—Five War Vessels Claimed.

BUENOS AYRES, Nov. 20.—The latest advices received here from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, say that additional towns in that state have gone over to the side of the provisional junta. Among them are Santinoel, San Lius, Parana and Cruzalta.

The enlistment of infantry and cavalry among the people of Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, is actively carried on.

Five of the government fleet are reported to have given their adhesion to the junta, which has adopted as its flag a white and red globe.

With the exception of Rio Grande Do Sul all the states of Brazil are tranquil. There does not appear to be the least truth in reports of a revolt in Para.

San Luis, the capital of the Argentine province of the same name and situated about 430 miles from this city, is reported to be in a ferment. Soldiers patrol the streets and the governor's house has been converted into a military headquarters. The Uruguayan gunboat Artiguas has gone up the river to guard the interests of Uruguay's territory.

A dispatch from Rio Grande Do Sul, via Montevideo, says that the insurgent leaders have not got implicit confidence in each other, and it is claimed that important secrets as to the insurgent forces and certain proposed movements have got almost at once into Fonseca's possession. It appears that the programme of insurrection included an attack on the important city of Desterro, capital of the province of Santa Catharina. The vessels at the disposal of the new movement were being quietly prepared for the expedition when it was learned that Fonseca was aware of the intention, and had taken steps to frustrate it. This has caused much disappointment, as it was hoped that the small but prosperous province of Santa Catharina might be induced without difficulty to join Rio Grande Do Sul.

The war preparations of the latter province continue with great activity and foreign engineers have been sent for from Montevideo to take charge of the construction of defensive works at Rio Grande Do Sul and other points.

Lost His Wager.

LA JUNTA, COL., Nov. 20.—W. H. Brotherton, the man who attempted to trundle a wheelbarrow from San Francisco to Chicago on a wager, died here this morning of mountain fever.

Children Cry for Pitcher's Castoria.

The annual production of sawed lumber in the United States would load a train of cars 25,000 miles long.

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